

Village HERALD

Serving East Rockaway, Lynbrook & Malverne

Gimme shelter

Refuge for single mothers looking for a new home

By KARENLYN BARONE

Jennifer is 20 years old, seven months pregnant and a current resident of Mommas House in Malverne. She is grateful for all the love and support she has received since her arrival in November, but apprehensive about her future and her suddenly precarious living situation.

Mommas House has been a vital source of help to pregnant women and single mothers and their babies on Long Island for 18 years. For the past 13 years, its Malverne location has been providing shelter, teaching fundamental parenting skills and offering a safe and loving environ-

ment for mothers in need. But now the facility must address its own need. It must vacate its Malverne residence by April, and to date it has not been able to find alternative housing.

"I'm having my baby in March, and we have to be out by April," Jennifer said. "It's going to be hard with a 1-month-old baby to pack up everything and move. I don't know what's going to happen."

Jennifer is one of more than 120 mothers who have lived at Mommas House in Malverne since it opened in 1990, getting help when they had nowhere else to turn.

"We're getting desperate,"
See **MOMMAS**, page 12



LAUREN BIVONA
Intel semifinalist

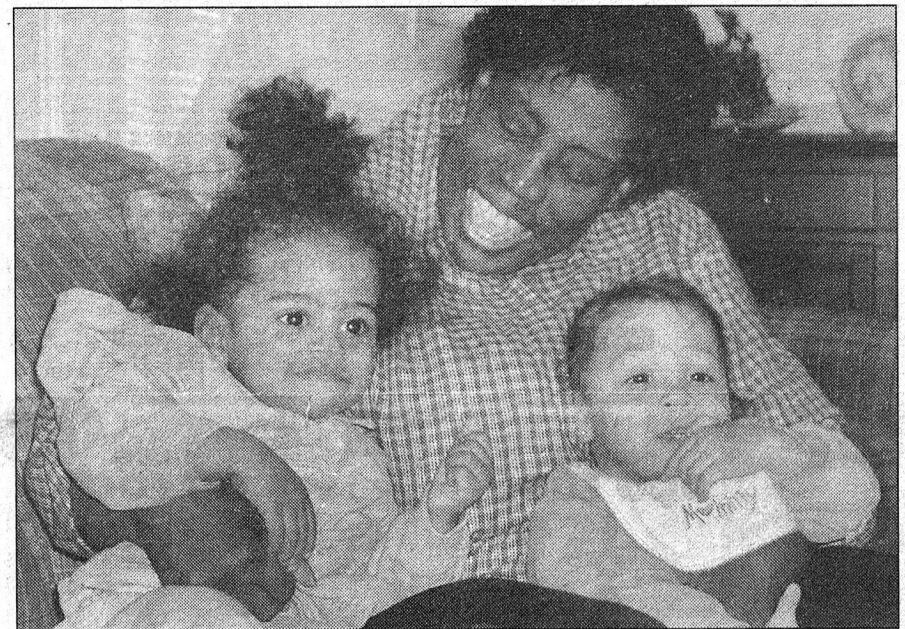
MAKING THE CUT

*Inside the mind of
a young scientist*

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Legacy lives on

*Mules coach steps
into big shoes*



Karenlyn Barone/Herald

MOMMAS HOUSE MANAGER RACHEL TAYLOR with young residents Michael, left, 18 months, and Mikayla, 16 months. The organization must leave the house behind Our Lady of Lourdes School in Malverne by April and is looking for a new home.



Karenlyn Barone/Herald

MOMMAS HOUSE RESIDENT JENNIFER, with Michael and Mikayla, whom she helps care for while their mothers are at work and school.

Mommas in need

Continued from front page
said founder Patricia Shea, who also oversees Mommas House locations in Wantagh, Glen Cove and Brookville. "We don't have a lot of money, and we desperately need a house."

The Malverne Mommas House is behind Our Lady of Lourdes Church. It has been a mutually beneficial association, but the church will be expanding in the coming year and the house is due to be demolished, according to a spokesperson for the parish.

"The church has been very, very good to us," said Shea. "We have been using that house for 13 years rent-free, and I've probably over-stayed my welcome."

Nevertheless, she must find another house to accommodate the mothers and children she works so hard to help. "We don't have much in the way of resources, so we are hoping someone will know of an available house for us," Shea said in a telephone interview. "We are hoping to find a handyman's special. We want to do a lot of sweat equity to get a house."

Mommas House is looking to relocate in the same area, and it needs a house with five bedrooms to accommodate four mothers with children and the live-in house manager.

"Our program is very structured, and

we are never disruptive to the neighborhood," said Shea. "We get many calls from woman who are homeless, and the girls who are pregnant need a home to bring their new babies to."

"Mommas House is the first mother/child residence on Long Island," said Shea. "We help the mothers get their GEDs or high school diplomas, and we provide a safe environment for their babies, while we help the moms with their parenting skills."

Many valuable skills are imparted by the house manager, Rachel Taylor, who was a pre-school teacher in her native Jamaica and has been with the facility since 1998. She also baby-sits for the children while their mothers attend class or work. Lately, she has added a new chore. "Every morning and every night I pray for these children, and I pray that someone will have a house in this neighborhood for us," said Taylor as she hugged residents Michael, 18 months old, and Mikayla, 16 months. "I believe somebody will come through for us."

Readers who know of houses that are available and would be appropriate for Mommas House can contact Shea at (516) 781-8637.